

Forest Health Strategy Work Group

June 16, 2004: Second Meeting
USDA Service Center, 232 Williams Lake Road
Colville, Washington

Members Present:

Pat McElroy, Chair, DNR Staff
Karen Ripley, Coordinator, DNR Staff
Vicki Lee, Secretary/Meeting Minutes, DNR Staff
Mike Blankenship, Ferry County Commissioner
Bruce Lippke, UW College of Forest Resources
Rich Fonda, Fire Ecologist, WWU
Barry Moore, WSU Dept. of Natural Resource Science
Peter Heide, Washington State Society of American Foresters
Maurice Williamson, Small Forest Landowner Advisory Committee
Steve Tveit, Boise Cascade
John St. Pierre, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Mike Petersen, The Lands Council
John Mankowski, WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Absent:

Ron Shultz, Executive Policy Advisor, Governor's Executive Policy Office
Bob Gara, Forest Entomologist, UW College of Forest Resources
Rick Brazell, USDA Forest Service

Guests:

Karl Denison (designated back-up for Rick Brazell)
Peter Griessman, WSU Cooperative Extension
John Viada, DNR Region Manager in Northeast Region
Don Strand, DNR District Manager for North Columbia District in Northeast Region
Roy Henderson, DNR State Lands Manager for Northeast Region

CALL TO ORDER:

Pat McElroy called the meeting to order at 9:05am. Introductions of the group members, staff and guests were made. Pat made a motion to review and approve the minutes from the May 18th meeting; minutes were approved. A motion was made to review and approve the Ground Rules. It was proposed to amend Ground Rule #9, to read, "Do not speak for the study group or other members or organizations..." Amendment was made. Ground Rules were approved. A motion was made to review and approve the Charter. Page 2, Line #45 was amended to replace Sasha

McGee's contact information with Vicki Lee's. Vicki will be providing secretarial support to the work group. A suggestion arose to document that US Fish and Wildlife Service declined to participate at this time due to budget constraints. The amendments were made. Charter approved.

Group Discussion of Field Trip:

Everyone thanked John St. Pierre for the very informative field trip.

Mike Petersen expressed his concern over the emphasis being put on the economics of the forest, instead of the ecological integrity.

McElroy was impressed with the work they did in the Ponderosa Pine making it more fire resistant.

Karl Denison commented on what a great job they had done and their strong job ethics. He offered a tour of a National Forest at a higher elevation with more of a mixed forest at a later date.

Bruce Lippke mentioned there was not much discussion on future conditions, and suggested:

1. Fire Risk – Lower or remove more trees than Colville
2. Stands – In Beetle kill areas need to look at what treatments would be more sustainable over time

Mike Blankenship – We have to look at what is the initial purpose of a forest. Teddy Roosevelt once said economics is a major key in a forest for the prosperity of the people. So we have to look at how do we maintain those forest and pay for the Forest Service and other things if it is not economically balanced.

McElroy pointed out that our job was to come up with a recommendation that would increase forest resiliency.

1 Pete Heide maintained solutions depend on the sites and landowner objectives.

2
3 St. Pierre emphasized the higher elevations are our biggest problem, trees are often shallow
4 rooted, we can't thin, or clear-cut.

5
6 Lippke raised a question, that when you have an area that has been cleaned or has had stand
7 replacement fires, that it is not necessarily harder. There are more options to give the stands
8 more flexibility and resiliency.

9
10 McElroy spoke of a special presentation he watched on T.V. last evening on Spruce Bark Beetle
11 in the Okanogan; the speaker was Paul Flanagan from the Forest Service. Suggested we get a
12 copy of the presentation.

13
14 **Biomes of Washington State: Background and Current Conditions – Karen Ripley**

15 Ripley pointed out the historic disturbance regime and recent forest insect and disease activity by
16 Washington Ecoregion. Explained the different species of trees and the conditions they are in
17 across the state. She showed photographs of how a forest changed from 1909, 1948, 1979, and
18 1989; and described some of the consequences. The most significantly altered forests are the
19 mixed conifer and Ponderosa Pine forests of eastern Washington. She handed out a copy of the
20 presentation and a 2003 map of Forest Disturbance within Ecoregions of Washington State.
21 Work group discussed and agreed that the eastside Ponderosa Pine and mixed conifer forests up
22 to the Cascade Crest are priority.

23
24 **Rich Fonda** gave a review of fire driven systems, and pointed out the difficulties and attention
25 raising hurdles (public perception), in managing fire-stable systems. Fonda spoke of active fire
26 management, and allowing fires to “become natural.” There were three handouts: 1) Burning
27 Characteristics of Western Conifer Needles, 2) Characteristics of Fires, and 3) Fire-Stable vs.
28 Fire-Resilient Characteristics. There was a discussion on public engagement.

Healthy Forests/Healthy Streams - Barry Moore (Handout on River Continuum)

Barry Moore explained the influence of watersheds to streams, and how the changes in Watersheds impact streams; that streams are in equilibrium with their watersheds. Moore expressed the need to protect and restore Riparian areas. Indicated highly disturbed watersheds produce unstable streams. Moore shared some restoration projects. He emphasized stream resources and ecological functions are inseparable. Stream health is linked to forest health. There was a discussion on the relationship between tree cover and stream output.

Invited Presentations on Forest Health Perceptions:

Dr. Keith Blatner – NIPF Landowner and Fire – Preliminary Results (Sent Karen a 40 page copy, plus other materials)

Dr. Keith Blatner described a qualitative study/survey that he conducted on the perceptions of Okanogan and Stevens County landowner groups with respect to threats to their forestland.

Results:

- Perceptions varied by landowner group (large-actives, medium-actives, farmers/ranchers, lifestyle, reservation allotment holders) and by county.
- Important perceived threats included regulation, insects/disease/fire, and noxious weeds.
- Landowners differentiated between logging vs. thinning or fuel management activities.
- Perceptions of fire as a threat or management tool varied with personal experiences with fire.

Blatner pointed out five barriers to use of prescribed fire: liability, smoke, fear of escape, cost & expertise needed to use it, and narrow burn windows. He described the need for change in liability laws relating to “escaped fires.” There has been some interesting work done in the South and Southeast on liability laws on use of prescribed fire. A copy of the paper may be available.

Maurice Williamson – Non-industrial Landowners (Handouts)

Williamson displayed a color-coordinated map showing the major landowners in 2003, also handed out a chart indicating a representative landowner pattern. The small eastside landowner owns 50 to 60 acres. Small landowners own an average of 40 acres each statewide. He pointed out the mosaic of landownership, and suggested considering landowner objectives. Gave an overview of Forest Health percentages, and spoke about the NIPF Harvest Level, and looking at the merchantable material towards long-term management strategies. He felt the role of the State is to help landowners understand the what, where, and how much of forest health problems. Williamson handed out “Landscape Level Validation of Douglas-Fir Beetle Stand Hazard-Rating System Using Geographical Information Systems”, as an example of what would be a useful tool to assist private landowners.

1 **Steve Tveit – Industrial Landowners** (Handout on Industrial Land Owner Perspective)

2 Steve described how risks associated with forest health, are addressed through management
3 strategies that include stocking control, diverse species and pointed out the greatest concerns are
4 over Watershed and Landscape fuels management. Pointed out the greatest concerns over
5 Watershed and Landscape level health issues, such as a large spruce budworm outbreak on fire
6 from federal lands. Spoke of salvage concerns, and listed several opportunities. A big concern
7 is getting public support and awareness. Public doesn't recognize DNR as an authority. We
8 need a better avenue to educate the public. There was a discussion of costs liabilities of
9 firefighting.

11 **Don Strand – Northeast Region Forest Health** (Handout: a copy of the PP Presentation)

12 Strand gave an overview of harvest lands and forest health issues. 95 % of treated areas are
13 under Forest Health prescriptions. The Region prioritization for harvest is guided by the Forest
14 Resource Plan. Strand spoke of Contract Harvesting being a tool to allow for greater flexibility
15 in sales, the need for a complete region inventory, and an eastside sustainable harvest
16 calculation. Strand concluded with an overview of several sales across the Region. There was a
17 discussion on time requirements for regular timber sales vs. emergency sales.

19 **John Mankowski – Department of Fish and Wildlife**

20 Five Policy Points for Forest Health Perspective

- 21 • Wildlife species are part of the system
- 22 • Forest Health looked at from monitoring and adaptive management perspective
 - 23 ❖ Rely on data and monitoring and scientific backing
- 24 • Address treatments at a landscape level
- 25 • Maintain Forest Health as part of current Policy and Regulatory arena
 - 26 ❖ Takes in HCP's and L.O. working towards regulatory predictability
 - 27 ❖ Become more aggressive with Forest Health issues
- 28 • Don't use Forest Health issues to set aside current protective system

29 Mankowski also described recent health management activity (700 acres) on 83,000 timbered
30 acres owned by WDFW.

32 **Karl Denison – Federal Forest Health Perceptions** (Handout and PP Presentation)

33 Forest Service owns 9.2 million acres of land, one-third of it is in the wilderness, one-third is in
34 the back country wilderness, than other landowners', and the other third is managed land. Most
35 of our lands are steep and more remote. One-third of our lands are a Condition Class II or III.

1 The FY 2004 fuels treatment target for WA eastside forests is 27,000 acres (about one-third of
2 what's needed on an annual basis). Seventy percent of the acres will be treated with prescribed
3 fire, the balance with mechanical or hand treatments. In the future we hope to move to a mix of
4 50/50. Relayed their barriers to success/possible solutions. Mentioned that smoke management
5 budget and biomass utilization are very critical. Denison presented a slide show on Dry Forest
6 Strategies, showing maps on forest types, insect population, and mortality vs. major fires.
7 Denison stated lightning causes 98 percent of their fires. They need to explore quicker
8 processes in order to salvage fire damaged-timber. One of their biggest problems is dwarf
9 mistletoe, which creates tree deformities and habitat for the spotted owl.

11 **Mike Petersen - Environmental Organizations** (Handout)

12 Petersen suggested looking more critically at the history of disturbance and fire in the ecosystem,
13 also looking at site-specific habitat types for structure and diversity. He urged the work group to
14 think about the impacts from management. How do we protect our Economic investment?
15 Salvage logging is perceived as harmful. Petersen elaborated on unintended consequences as a
16 result of Forest Health treatments. Would like to see more baseline information on current vs.
17 historic tree mortality, hear more about soils and productivity. Fire behavior is driven by
18 weather/climate; not fuel loading. Has concerns over slash and working around
19 communities/homes. Suggested that our vision should emphasize fuel reduction, restoration and
20 maintenance issues around communities; increasing forest structural complexity, preparing for
21 climate changes; and protecting natural processes.

23 **Brainstorm: Opportunities, Barriers, Needs, and Incentives – Facilitator, Peter Griessman**

- 24 • Sociology: More sophisticated and comprehensive, need to educate the landowner and the
25 public about prescribed fire and thinning
- 26 • Regulation is closely related
- 27 • Smoke Management
- 28 • Burning, wind
- 29 • Stream buffers
- 30 • Need to quantify smoke impacts vs. wildfire
- 31 • Particulate matter output from prescribed burning has a limit

- 1 • Need to understand “smoke laws”
- 2 • Our group needs information to inform the public of trade-offs
- 3 • Can the state streamline prescribed burning?
- 4 • Put limits on particulate matter? Is it a barrier?
- 5 • Need to know what Forest Health goal we want? (Its in the Charter, do what Legislature
- 6 mandated)
- 7 • Need to plan on how all ownerships can improve
- 8 • Opportunity: Create mosaic
- 9 • Barrier: What are the appropriate percent of targets? We need targets for landscape
- 10 • Barrier: Resistance, resiliency, I,D,F
- 11 • Incentives are needed for PCT, prescribed burning, and MNTC of good stands
- 12 • Compensate for non merchantable values
- 13 • Should DNR expand their leadership role?
- 14 • We need resources to provide sufficient extensive technical assist advocacy
- 15 • We need to work more effectively with the public
- 16 • Barriers to implementation:
- 17 • Public perception
- 18 • Landowner perception
- 19 • Agency bias/position
- 20 • Liability
- 21 • Economics (Money for proactive treatments, not just reactive treatments)
- 22 • Permitting process = burden to taking any action
- 23 • Pro-action = many opportunities
- 24 • Community pay for the planning process
- 25 • Education
- 26 • Buy in
- 27 • Integration
- 28 • Access the National Fire Plan dollars for Community Fire Planning dollars
- 29 • Barrier to coordinating strategy:
- 30 • Heterogeneous

- Multiple ownerships
- How do we address Forest Health on a landscape level? How can we convince people to make improvements? Which ones? Where?
- Need a Mission Statement: What is Forest Health? Vision: What are we trying to achieve?
- Need to reduce number of dead trees
- Opportunities to retain options through avoiding large fires in the short term
 - Landscape level firebreaks

Peter suggested that more time was needed. We will revisit subject at the July 27th Meeting in Spokane.

Action: Karen will send out a compilation of the items identified today

- Opportunity for tools, software templates, training package for specific audiences (specific L.O., tribe, community)
 - Barrier: Dollars
 - Incentives for success
 - Involvement
 - Understand consequences of action or inaction
 - Partner with existing watershed groups
 - WRIA
 - Consistency geographic unit boundaries
 - Organizations
 - Incentives for public L.O. and Land Managers
 - Show of support
 - Participate in project development treatment process
 - Able to implement project
 - Diverse input = access to resources = credibility
 - Long term = ecological research
 - Monitoring
 - Evaluation
 - Need baseline “Forest Health Index” to show trends

- 1 • Identify infrastructure needs
- 2 • Small logging process
- 3 • Co-gen, gassification
- 4 • New ways to add value to residual material
- 5 • Requires scale
- 6 • Dependability
- 7 • L.O. objectives vary
- 8 • Need flexible strategy
- 9 • Define goals: forest characters, how much, and where
- 10 • Need broad array of tools
- 11 • Need vision and understanding of impacts
- 12 • Be able to share common language
- 13 • Insects
- 14 • Need density management
- 15 • Seral spp
- 16 • High tree vigor management tools (pheromones, monitoring)
- 17 • I,D,F, what is missed?
- 18 • Need to present what reality is in Smoke Management in Washington
- 19 • Need Forest Practice process, emergency and non emergency
- 20 • Need information on Community Plan, 10-year Strategy, and playing it out. (Mark Gray
- 21 needs to be here for next meeting).
- 22 • Need Local Forest Practice Board to come in and give a 15-20 minutes presentation.

23

24 Ripley was concerned about Task List. A Task List and Draft Meeting dates with locations were
25 distributed. Peter Heide suggested parceling out some of the tasks, then scheduling into a
26 meeting. Set up a Matrix then time schedule for producing. Ripley proposed to move the three
27 regulatory models to next month's agenda. **AGREED**

28 Handouts on RCW 7606, the Extreme Hazard Law, and Noxious Weeds were distributed.

29 **Action:** Mail copies and all handouts distributed today to Barry Moore, Bob Gara and Ron
30 Shultz

1 Lippke handed out two DVD's on Wildfire in the West, Issues and Research
2
3 Next meeting everyone comes prepared with their definition of how characteristics differ
4 between healthy and unhealthy forests.
5
6 The meeting adjourned at 4:40 pm.
7
8 The next meeting will be 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday, July 27, 2004, in Spokane,
9 Washington at the Ramada Inn Airport, in the Washington Room. Address: 8909 Airport Road,
10 Spokane, WA. Phone: 509-838-5211. This hotel is in easy walking distance of the Spokane
11 Airport.